THE Sad and Lamentable CRY OF OPPRESSION AND CRUELTY In the CITY of BRISTOL.

RELATING

To the Prosecution of certain *Dissenting-Protestants* in some Passages most Notorious to the Grieved Inhabitants of the said CITY.

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THE Sad and Lamentable CRY OF OPPRESSION AND CRUELTY In the CITY of BRISTOL.

IT is remarkable, that two Gentlemen (for ſo they would be accounted) *viz.* Sheriff *Knight*, and *John Helliar* an Attorney, aſſiſted with ſome Inferior Officers, and a rude multitude of Youth, *&c.* have been, for ſome Months laſt paſt, moſt vigorous in the ſevere proſecution of Diſſenting Proteſtants in the ſaid City, whoſe Fury hath tranſported them beyond all bounds of Humanity, Law and Juſtice. They are not content with their own reſpective Offices of Sheriff and Conſtable, (for the Conſervation of his Majeſties Peace, in Subordination to his Juſtices,) and

addition of the Place of Informers, but they Peremptorily assume to themselves the Authority of Justices and Rulers over the Heads of the Lawful and Chief Magistrates of that City, to the great disparagment and Infamy of the Polity thereof, as by the following particulars is evinced.

1. *John Helliar*, attended with other Officers, and a rude multitude, did in a most riotous manner deface and spoile several Houses which are Free-holds, (because in part thereof the Dissenters usually have met) to the value of some hundreds of pounds, much of which have been acted upon the Lord's Day, with Iron Sledges, and other Tools, making a terrible noise, to the great wonder and amazement of the Inhabitants of the said City, and of Strangers and Tradesmen that came to the Fair: At which time much of this was Transacted, by occasion whereof, as also by the Excessive Spoil upon some Tradesmens Goods in the Fair, the Trade and Commerce was much distracted and spoiled; and many with great disappointments forced to return home under sore discouragments and discontents.

Secondly, The said persons after the aforesaid defacing and spoil made upon the Houses, have taken and kept possession, not suffering the Inhabitants, Tenants or others to Re-enter.

Thirdly, Many of the said Dissenters are violently pulled and forced out of their Meetings, and the Doors barred against them: These officious Gentlemen, *viz.* Sheriff *Knight* and *John Helliar*, with the rude

rude Multitude attending them, have constantly visited the Quakers Meetings without doors, near their usual place of Meeting, where, in their presence, the Rude Persons have offered very gross abuses; by haleing Persons, beating some and tearing of Womens Scarfs, and other shameful Incivilities. And it hath been observed, that these things have been done, at the abusive Example of *John Helliar*; and notice given by him in these or such like words, to wit, *Boyes, have a care of the Womens Hoods and Scarfes*, &c. upon which they have fallen to such their abusive Work.

Fourthly, Besides these sordid Abuses, the Persons aforesaid, *viz.* Sheriff *Knight*, and *John Helliar*, with their Retinue, have frequently come to dissipate the said Meetings so early, before any pretext of Religious Exercise performed by the Meeters, and have several times sent a considerable number to Prison at their own voluntary pleasures, *viz. Bridewell* and *Newgate*, without convening them before any of his Majesties Justices of Peace, or Judicial Examination or Warrant of Commitment, and there detain'd them for some time, till brought before the Mayor or other Justices.

Fifthly, But that which most aggravates their merciless Cruelty, is, their thronging and crouding such numbers in the Goal, which is known to be a Strait, Nasty and offensive Goal; where, after they had Imprisoned near Fifty, there was such straitness of lodging, that all could not lodge at once, without crouding three or four in a very narrow Bed: Several accounts of credible persons are given, that the last

last Lords Day being the 26 of *February*, they sent forty more of the Quakers, first to *Bridewell*; and then about ten of the Clock of the same Night, removed them to *Newgate*: And that Night Thirty five were forced to sit up, for whom there was no Beds; some lay upon the Table-board, and some under the Board, where the Mastiff Dog used to lie, having the Foot-frame of the Board for their Pillow; so making what shift they could to get a little rest. The next Night they got in some Matts, where they lay as thick as they could thereon, in a cold Room, and some in Hamocks over their Heads, and in the morning they took up their lodging, and heaped it up, to make Room for to pass by, it being the publick Thorough-fare of the Gaol.

Sixthly, Before this last crouding of these Persons in Goal, the Prisoners had not been wanting to address the Magistrates for Enlargement of the Prison, laying the danger, not only of their Healths but Lives before them, as also of Infection to the City: whereupon one Chief Magistrate did openly confess, *That if he had a Dog he loved, he would not put him there.* And the Mayor and other Justices in pursuance of a former Order of Sessions, have urged for the Enlargement of the Goal, and *Richard Lane* Esquire, the Elder Sheriff gave consent and desired it. But the said Sheriff *Knight*, like a person void of all good Nature and Humanity, hath been the chief obstructer therein, as divers Indifferent and Credible Persons of the Neighbour-hood have certified under their Hands.

Seventhly,

Seventhly, But this is not all the misery that these People are exposed to, with respect to the endangering of their Lives, for while they are under these hard usages in Prison, divers of them have been greatly spoiled by exorbitant Distresses made upon their Houshold Goods, Shop-ware, and Merchandize; in which *John Helliar* is principally officious, sparing not to break open Doors of Houses Shops and Cellars, *&c.* carrying away Linnen, Beds and Bedding, Plate, Brass and Pewter, *&c.* taking from one Merchant, for a Fine of Ten pounds five shillings, a Tun of Wine, and Six pounds in Money besides out of his Counter; pulling off one man's Coat from his Back in his own House, and taking Ten pounds odd Money out of his Pocket: Besides, 'tis notoriously known how most shamefully they under-sell the Goods Distrained. All which Precedent Barbarities, seem to bespeak a design of Destruction to the said People, both in their Persons and Estates, with absolute Ruin to their Wives, Children, and Posterity: Besides, the great Distress that is hereby brought upon many poor Families, that have dependance upon divers Sufferers in their Trades and Manufactures, divers of the said Prisoners and Sufferers are known to be considerable in Trade and Traffick, by means whereof some Thousands *per Annum* have accrewed to his Majesties Customes.

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The Conſideration of the ſaid ſad Premiſſes hath brought great amazement and conſternation upon many of his Majeſties Subjects being Spectators, being very Anxious about the Deſign, Tendance and Conſequence of theſe proceedings: The verity of matter of Fact hereby expoſed is not aggravated with all the grievous Circumſtances attending the ſaid proſecution, notoriouſly known in the ſaid City, and many other places; Many indifferent and Credible perſons being able and ready to atteſt the ſame.

The precedent Account being an Abreviation out of ſome Letters from Credible Perſons in *Briſtol*; the further Relation of the Cruelty and Arbitrary Proceedings of the before-mentioned, and others their Abbettors and Aſſiſtants, is left to the immediate Sufferers themſelves to inlarge on in due time, and as they ſhall ſee Cauſe.

FINIS.